



Cornell University Student Assembly

Cornell University Student Assembly

Minutes of the Thursday, February 20th, 2020 Meeting
4:45-6:43pm in the Memorial Room of Willard Straight Hall

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

- a. C. Huang called the meeting to order at 4:45 pm.
- b. Roll Call:
 - i. Present: M. Adeghe, M. Baker, C. Benedict, J. Clancy, O. Egharevba, J. Feit, C. Huang, J. Kroll, Y. Li, N. Matolka, I. Pavlov, T. Reuning, S. Sun, L. Smith, N. Watson, B. Weintraub, S. Xu, V. Xu, J. Youngblood, Y. Yuan
 - ii. Absent: J. Anderson (excused), A. Cass (excused), U. Chukwukere (excused), M. Haddad (excused), G. Martin (excused), P. Solovyeva (excused), K. Wondimu

II. Announcements & Presentations

- a. Student Assembly Elections
 - i. I. Pavlov asked for those interested in the Womxn's Issues seat to reach out to her at iap29@cornell.edu.
 - ii. L. Zheng noted that the Elections Calendar has been amended. She clarified that the Elections Calendar is determined by the Director of Elections and the Office of Assemblies.
 1. There will be an information session on February 27, 2020 after the S.A. meeting.
 2. The registration deadline is now extended to Monday, March 2, 2020.
 3. The mandatory campaign meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 3, 2020.
 - iii. J. Clancy asked for an explanation for the cause of the quick turnout that led to the announcement being so close to the beginning of the campaign period.
 1. L. Zheng responded that the communication process was delayed. The situation was not ideal and it is something they will work towards improving in the future.
- b. Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion C. Benedict gave the following updates:
 - i. Wet'suwet'en Nation/Coastal GasLink Pipeline
 1. C. Benedict gave an overview of the situation in Northern British Columbia. Native American and Indigenous Students at Cornell (NAISAC) has issued a call for support. He explained that the Coastal GasLink company is trying to construct an oil pipeline through the sovereign territory of the Wet'suwet'en people. The Canadian Royal Mounted Police has been violently arresting protestors, tearing down blockades, and intimidating people to clear a

path for pipeline construction. In solidarity, many First Nations around Canada have blockaded railroads. NAISAC is holding a drive to collect goods to support the Wet'suwet'en blockade in Ontario. He asked those able to donate items from a provided list to contact him. Supplies are to go to Ontario late Friday night or early Saturday morning.

- ii. Diversity Innovation Funding approval
 - 1. C. Benedict noted the approval of the \$1,500 request from the Pan-African Students Association for its "This Africk" fashion show.
- c. O. Egharevba: Increasing S.A. Transparency Using Electronic Voting
 - i. O. Egharevba gave a background of the initiative to use electronic voting. The rationale is to increase the S.A.'s profile as a student organization and further build trust with the people it serves. He gave an overview of his initiative process and three problems with the current voting system. First, the voting system does not scale, and it will become increasingly difficult to count votes accurately if the S.A. becomes larger in the future. Second, low attendance at most S.A. meetings mean that many of their votes are not known. People know how the S.A. voted, but not how individual representatives voted. Third, it encourages representatives to vote with the majority even if they have a different opinion.
 - ii. O. Egharevba noted that the initial solution was to vote using iClickers and publish results on the S.A. minutes and website. However, with using iClickers, votes are not displayed at the time of meetings. People will have to look at next week's agenda or meetings for the results. There are also questions of how to handle roll call votes and how to conduct secret ballots. There was also no specific timetable for implementation and it caused fatigue among the S.A. In addition, he stressed the need to provide more benefits that justify the monetary and nonmonetary costs.
 - iii. O. Egharevba shared a solution to use specialized clickers that could be bought from Meridia Interactive Solutions. The clickers and software would be provided for them with no recurring fees. The application would enable votes and the speakers list to be displayed in real time. It would also make attendance-taking easier. There is also a fully customizable design, and they could potentially put the S.A. branding on it. The total cost would be \$1275, including 28 clickers, 1 USB receiver/base station, shipping, and a \$250 discount. The next steps would be to determine how to integrate the clickers with current S.A. rules, figure out where to place the screen, and introduce a resolution that would make logistical changes and secure funding to buy the equipment. He would like to determine how to integrate this with SA procedures and rules after February Break. By the end of March, there would be a resolution.
 - iv. J. Feit commented that S.A. funds could be better spent on things including new microphones, speaker system, and website updating. He stated having trouble seeing the benefit of the clickers other than counting votes, and foresees substantial technological difficulties.

III. New Business

- a. [S.A Resolution #38: Approving Special Projects Request for Black Students United](#)

- i. M. Adeghe introduced the resolution. The \$5,000 request from Black Students United to travel to the National Museum of African American History in Washington, D.C. over February Break was approved by the Appropriations Committee. It will be a 24-hour trip and is open to the public.
 - ii. Motion to move the Resolution #38 to Business of the Day – **approved** with a vote of 18-0-1.
 - iii. Motion to vote on Resolution #38 – **approved** with a vote of 18-0-1.
- b. [S.A. Resolution #39: Approving Special Projects Request for Smart is Strong Foundation](#)
 - i. M. Adeghe introduced the resolution and clarified that it does not need to be voted on to be approved. It can be voted on if the S.A. is trying to overturn it. The resolution approves \$500 of Special Projects funding to the Smart is Strong Foundation in assisting with the funding for the International Women's Day Conference.
- c. [S.A. Resolution #40: Reversing the Special Projects Funding Decision for Cornell Fashion Collective](#)
 - i. M. Adeghe introduced the resolution to reverse the Special Projects Funding decision of \$2,000 for Cornell Fashion Collective as it will be receiving funds from SAIFC.
 - ii. Motion to move the Resolution #40 to Business of the Day – **approved** with a vote of 18-0-1.
 - iii. Motion to vote on Resolution #40 – **approved** with a vote of 18-0-1.
- d. [S.A. Resolution #41: Creating an ad-hoc Committee for Comprehensive Housing Policy Review](#)
 - i. C. Huang introduced the resolution to create an ad-hoc committee to deal with housing policy. She noted there are a lot of issues with housing and the resolution would create a channel for students to go to. There will be two co-chairs and six members—two of which will be from the S.A., two of which will be from the community and two of which will be from the Residential Student Congress.
 - ii. Motion to move Resolution #41 to Business of the Day – **approved** with a vote of 18-0-1.
 - iii. Motion to vote on Resolution #41 – **approved** with a vote of 18-0-1.
- e. [S.A. Resolution #42: Reducing the Number of Petition Signatures Needed for Certain At-Large Positions](#)
 - i. T. Reuning introduced the resolution to reduce the number of petition signatures for certain at-large positions, including Womxn's Issues Representative, Minority Liaison, LGBTQIA+ Liaison, First Generation Student Representative, and International Students Liaison. These positions represent marginalized communities, which are already smaller on campus. T. Reuning shared that when he was running, he had to out himself as transgender in order to obtain signatures.
 - ii. Y. Yuan shared concerns over line 39 stating the amendment will be effective immediately as the election rules have already been released. This change in the Bylaws may create confusion among petitioners.

1. C. Huang noted that the resolution would not constitute a Bylaws or Charter change, but rather a change to the election rules. It could be communicated through discussion with the Office of Assemblies.
 2. G. Giambattista noted that they would need to ensure that everyone has the information to participate.
- iii. B. Weintraub recognized that he is not a member of any marginalized community on campus. His concern speaks to the change it would make to the Womxn's, Minority, International, and First Generation Student positions. By reducing the number of signatures required, there may be an idea created that these positions may require less of a commitment or participation, or reduced qualifications. It may send a message of not having to reach out to as many people. He suggested creating a separate resolution for the LGBTQIA+ Liaison seat and then voting separately.
1. M. Adeghe responded that there are a lot of seats that require 75 or less signatures. She has never been under the impression that there is a correlation between number of required signatures and qualifications.
 2. L. Zheng raised a point of information. All of the college seats, except the Arts & Sciences Representative seat, requires 75 signatures. She agreed with M. Adeghe's point.
- iv. Y. Li stated that it may be unfair to change the rules. He proposed to have the resolution amended to be effective beginning the next election cycle,
- v. M. Adeghe asked for a straw poll of "effective immediately" versus "effective in the Fall" to gauge whether it would be a hindering factor in approving the resolution.
- vi. J. Feit stressed the importance of having the resolution passed and be effective immediately so they can continue to have a diverse assembly that accurately represents the student body. He encouraged retaining the resolution as written.
- vii. O. Egharevba urged the importance of getting individuals from marginalized communities into student government. He shared concerns with changing the requirements after the start of the election.
- viii. O. Egharevba made a motion to amend line 29 to replace "effective immediately" to "effective Fall 2020."
1. Motion seconded.
 2. L. Zheng indicated there is a second information session occurring soon and she has the Net IDs of everyone who attended the first session. It could help with getting out the information more quickly.
 3. Dissent from M. Adeghe and T. Reuning. M. Adeghe said their mission with this resolution changes with this amendment. T. Reuning said they want to increase accessibility immediately.
 4. Vote to vote on the amendment – approved with a vote of 12-8.
 5. V. Xu asked if the college enrollment numbers have historically remained the same. It seems that A&S enrollment has historically decreased while enrollment with other colleges have largely remained the same. She has not seen issues in the past about not having enough people running.

6. I. Pavlov stated that adding this amendment feels like using an institutional barrier as a scapegoat for acting out of immediate change.
7. Y. Yuan said this would not be fair to other candidates.
- ix. Motion to move this resolution until after the S.A. Resolution #30 panel – **approved** with a vote of 18-0-1.
- x. Motion to amend the agenda to move S.A. Resolution #30 before S.A. Resolution #41 – **approved** with a vote of 18-0-1.

IV. Business of the Day

- a. [S.A. Resolution #30: Urging Cornell University to Contribute Financial Support for the Summer 2020 Student Contribution Pilot Program](#)
 - i. This resolution seeks to support waiving the Student Contribution Fee for low-income students pursuing non-paid summer opportunities over the summer.
 - ii. Panelist J. Davidoff introduced himself as a first generation, low-income student. He is the son of a single mother and is the first of his family of refugees to be born in America. He supported abolishing the Student Contribution Fee and implored the S.A. to pass this resolution.
 - iii. Panelist Mark identified himself as an undocumented student. He shared that his sister was previously admitted to Cornell but unable to attend due to financial limitations and an undocumented status. The Student Contribution Fee would have been too much. Ten years later, he is the first person from his school to go to an Ivy League institution and the second individual in his large family to attend college. He shared the hardships of sometimes not being able to eat and having no place to live. In addition, his work adds to the stress of academics.
 - iv. Panelist Brianna introduced herself as a junior. After deciding to attend Cornell, she worked five part-time jobs in high school to afford the Student Contribution Fee. After taxes, she was making about \$6/hour. She shared that she is tens of thousands of dollars in student debt. She currently works three jobs and struggles to pay the Student Contribution Fee. She identified her educational influences on her younger siblings as an intense burden.
 - v. Panelist Marlena introduced herself and shared that during the second semester of junior year, her mother fell and broke her leg. They then discovered she had terminal cancer. She took a leave of absence to take care of her mother and support her family. As a working class student, she feels that the Student Contribution Fee is a barrier to education. She shared that it was a struggle to work during the summer to afford the student contribution.
 - vi. Panelist identified herself as a senior and shared that her mother was diagnosed and passed away last April. Being able to work during the summer and pay the student contribution fee is not the case for all students. She is currently working two jobs. There are many contributions that her low-income peers do at Cornell that is not monetary.
 - vii. SA member thanked the panelists for sharing their stories and taking the time to come. She asked for some examples of opportunities the panelists could take if they could have the pilot program installed.

1. Panelist Rachel shared that last summer, she wanted to work for a union in justice-oriented work. She was able to get some funding, but it did not cover lost wages. While she was able to take on the experience with financial support, it was still challenging because there were things she missed out on or could not do in her community.
- viii. T. Reuning made a call to the question – approved with no dissent.
- ix. Motion to vote on Resolution #30 – approved with a vote of 19-0-0.

V. Recess until 6:15

VI. Continued: New Business

- a. Continued discussion on Resolution #42.
 - i. I. Pavlov supported the resolution as a way to support intersectional feminism on campus.
 - ii. S. Sun recommended scaling the number of required signatures to be reflective of the number of the members in the community. The international and first-gen communities are smaller and proportionally scaling the required number of signatures might be a stronger justification.
 1. M. Adeghe said they do not have those numbers and may not need or want to. The numbers may also be difficult to obtain for some communities.
 - iii. J. Feit said he wanted a better understanding of what reservations some individuals may have. He feels there is no downside to enacting the resolution immediately.
 - iv. M. Adeghe asked for a straw poll on whether S.A. members are comfortable with voting now.
 1. 6 members noted they are comfortable with voting.
 2. 11 members noted they would support the resolution as is.
 3. 7 members noted they would support the resolution if the amendment is passed.
 - v. Motion to move the resolution to Business of the Day – approved with a vote of 18-0-1.
 - vi. Motion to vote on the resolution.
 1. S.A. member made a dissent. He has a question he would like to ask.
 2. Motion failed with a vote of 8-9-1.
 - vii. J. Clancy said he will vote for the resolution as is without the amendment. However, the communication should have been made clearer. It is not equitable to bring this up after the information session was held. This should not happen in the future.
 - viii. L. Smith agreed with J. Clancy. He acknowledged it is a great resolution but it could hurt the credibility of the S.A. He asked for a committee to look into setting the number of seats based on proportion.
 - ix. M. Baker said she does not feel the reduced number for the Womxn's Representative seat is accurate given that women make up 53% of population. She suggested having two resolutions.

1. A. Adeghe responded she is not comfortable with having two resolutions. She noted the power dynamics and that womxn are not equal.
- b. Motion to extend the meeting by 10 minutes – **approved** with a vote of 18-0-1.
 - i. B. Weintraub asked why the resolution was not brought up earlier.
 1. SA member responded that they had their first spring meeting this Sunday. They did not want to wait to introduce this the next cycle and continue disenfranchising people.
 - ii. O. Egharevba said he is not opposed to accessibility. However, he noted that the timing was controversial.
 - iii. A. Adeghe made a motion to vote – **approved** with no dissent
 - iv. Motion to vote on Resolution #42 – **approved** with a vote of 12-4-2.
- c. Statement of Solidarity with Not Again SU – approved 18-0-0
 - i. C. Benedict introduced a statement of solidarity with the Not Again SU movement at Syracuse University. The movement is protesting the lack of university response and Chancellor Kent Syverud’s lack of approving all of the demands that were listed by the Not Again SU movement last semester. He explained that students occupied a building and were all immediately suspended by the university.
 - ii. J. Feit noted that the things transpiring at Syracuse University are disgusting representations of the hatred in this country. The right to protest is the only way things get done in this county and he supports these protests. He urged S.A. members that they have an obligation to stand up for those who do not have that privilege.
 - iii. Motion to vote – **approved** with no dissent.
 - iv. Motion to approve the statement of solidarity with Not Again SU – **approved** with a vote of 18-0-0.
- d. Motion to extend the meeting by 5 minutes – **approved** with no dissent.

VII. Continued: Business of the Day

- a. [S.A. Resolution #31: Amending the Student Assembly Charter to Create a Ticket System for the President and Executive Vice President Election](#)
 - i. Motion to table the resolution to February 27, 2020 – **tabled** with a vote of 16-0-1.
- b. [S.A. Resolution #33: Changing The Name of the “LGBTQ+ Liaison At-Large” Position to “LGBTQIA+ Liaison At-Large”](#)
 - i. SA member made a motion to amend line 85 to add “queer” after “transgender” – resolution **amended** with a vote of 17-0-1.
 - ii. Motion to vote – approved with no dissent.
 - iii. Motion to vote on Resolution #33 – **approved** with a vote of 17-0-1.

VIII. Adjournment

- a. Meeting adjourned at 6:43 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Catherine Tran
 Clerk, Office of the Assemblies